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IAEA-EURATOM: Failure to produce an agreement on safeguards in talks between EURATOM and the IAEA could soon cause great difficulties.

The seventh round of negotiations on safeguards required by the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) begins next week. The procedures to ensure that non-nuclear-weapon states do not divert fissionable materials from peaceful uses were supposed to have come into effect last March. The negotiations on how the IAEA will enforce such procedures for EURATOM countries have been particularly difficult, however, because some of EURATOM's members have advanced non-military nuclear programs and because EURATOM has its own regional safeguards system.

The basic problem of the negotiations has been to define the relationship so that the IAEA would be satisfied that enforcement safeguards were adequate and EURATOM would not think that its own safeguards system was being superseded. A precise definition of the role of the IAEA inspectors is thus a crucial issue. The EURATOM negotiators recently have voiced the fear that the IAEA now wishes to give the inspectors the sole right to conduct unannounced inspections, contrary to its own earlier idea that the inspectors should be primarily observers.

Until an acceptable agreement is reached, the five EURATOM non-nuclear-weapon states will not ratify the NPT. Failure at this session would also delay Japanese consideration of the treaty. Tokyo has been watching the EURATOM negotiations closely and will insist that it will not accept safeguards more restrictive than those applied to EURATOM.

Finally, if agreement is not reached soon, the Soviets are likely to renew their criticism of the US for continuing to supply enriched uranium to EURATOM non-nuclear-weapon states without IAEA safeguards. The US decided last February to maintain shipments as long as EURATOM and IAEA were negotiating in good faith--an action the Soviets term a "clear violation" of the NPT. [REDACTED]

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